

LOST LETTERS AND  
OTHER ANIMALS

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“In the Dreaming the land was flat. There were no gorges and no hills, and no rivers. The animals lived in one tribe and spoke with one tongue, so they could understand one another.”

—Max Berry, *Lexicon*

“It was said that [s]he was hunting stillness and that... [s]he carried an empty box on h[er] back, a box with a single eye, which ate time.”

—B. Caitling, *The Vorrh*

“For someone who didn’t know, did it make a difference whether a person was dead or just very far away?”

—Jenny Erpenbeck, *The End of Days*

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THE GHOST PLANTS:  
A FABLE

*It's time to look for the ghost plants*

draw an elaborate map of forest  
and field trails thread

through windmills and birch trees

all the flowers have mouths

the lines lead to a small circle  
where you will see the ghosts

and a clock that devours its own hands

*Planes move across copper clouds*

you make objects with your hands

thin strips of paper  
folded into a red-winged blackbird

the map covers every room in the house  
a letter waits

to be written you won't find

the right words  
until the year collapses into a heap of light

*In another story you swallow pills like petals*

and watch the performers  
juggle watches

somewhere onstage your boyfriend  
pushes furniture around as you

close your eyes to the sound of wind chimes

you never worry about hunting or  
regret a mural of wings

on stage you forget  
to record the static

of silence  
as though language were a prop

to follow to fly to furrow back to

*A wind unwinds the power lines*

you count the number of vibrations

echoing from the leaving  
morning becomes a dark crater

even a fleck of lint will stop the sun

you study each shadow  
for proper spinning and speed

*In another story you never leave*

there are many years of writing  
the wrong words

you pile the letters  
like so many lanterns

a warning to this wanting

you try to convince yourself  
to swallow away

you make the word  
into *ghostmaker* her figure fades

you walk through the city almost forgetting

*You dream a door opens its mouth*

words spill out like a message  
being written into cloud

more years pass

you carry a red stone

you tattoo a map onto your arms  
and study the solar system

a burning current of rings and waves

you pack green plums and paper  
you bring your white dog

*To prepare you memorize the fable of the failed deer*

when she was born  
her hooves were small as bolts

her throat so weak  
she couldn't drink her mother's milk

her eyes were closed for weeks

you're lucky

you have hands  
your mouth is strong

*In another story you carry a loon and forge your fingerprints*

your boyfriend drinks too much  
years before he dies

you watch the lake turn  
into a frozen field

you worry about what escapes

a spider web a raven  
words become their action

probably closer to blur of blue sky

no not sky or light  
not like

objects without their faces

*Keep walking deeper into the forest*

you see deer creatures  
with pale flowers growing from antlers

the trees are shaped like bodies

branches bend into curved backs  
faces smudged with leaves

you tie red ribbons to your fingers  
and crouch close to the ground

then you see the saddest bloom

it remembers a lot  
little seahorse without roots

*In another story you carry a box in your mouth*

inside a bird sings  
until a single bulb blooms so bright

it replaces fire and even the sun

then you will know  
where words go to die

everything will be both  
new and terrible at the same time